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ABSTRACT

Highlighting the fact that a different concept in delivery is required to provide educational programs and services to mobile populations, this paper describes the special educational needs of mobile students, gives the legislative history that has led to creation of an administrative structure to fulfill those needs, and suggests policies and programs that should be implemented. Following a discussion of the unique issues involved in delivering educational services to migrants and other mobile populations, an outline of the various amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is provided. The next section points out the need for coordinated program operations throughout the educational system at the national, state, and local levels from preschool through postsecondary levels. This section also discusses the Migrant Student Record Transfer System, the training of school personnel in the technology required for operating and managing a mobile education system, the development of a system to educate the student who is mobile while pursuing a postsecondary degree, the various programs which have been established for the postsecondary student, and the need for interstate communication and credit accrual and exchange. The paper concludes by recommending areas of needed research and a reporting procedure for the Office of Migrant Education. (CM)

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EDUCATION FOR

MOBILE POPULATIONS IN AMERICA

A Rationale for the Office of Migrant Education

U. S. Department of Education

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PREFACE

The most critical factor in providing education for migrant and other mobile students is maintaining instructional continuity as the students move from school to school within or between states and as they progress through educational levels. The beginnings of an efficient and effective delivery system to assure that continuity was realized recently with creation of a separate Office of Migrant Education within the new U. S. Department of Education. Continuation and expansion of the Office will ensure achievement of the following goals:

1. To design a comprehensive educational system to meet the special needs of migrant and other mobile students, in urban as well as rural schools.

2. To effect intrastate and interstate coordination among federal, state, and local education agencies to ensure continuity in all educational programs and related services for migrant/mobile students.

3. To provide maximum freedom of choice for mobile students and to improve equality and the quality of their education.

4. To maintain, operate, and improve existing special communications systems for migrant/mobile education, especially the computerized Migrant Student Record Transfer System.

5. To promote understanding and acceptance of the need to implement programs which accommodate the unique needs of mobile students as they move around the nation.

This paper describes the special educational needs of mobile students, gives the legislative history that has led to creation of an administrative structure that can fulfill those needs, and suggests the policies and programs that should be put in place to realize the structure's potential.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial people have moved. Perhaps the original and primary reason was survival. Whatever it was, mobility is ingrained in the human condition.

All of us at one time or another will be motivated to move. Significant numbers of us will move more than once. Every year one out of five Americans changes residence. Certain groups such as farm workers, fishers, and construction workers experience mobility as a life style. And the mobility phenomenon accelerates daily because of both technology and human desire.

On the other hand, the human condition is also influenced by a desire for permanence. And we as a nation have expended a great deal of creativity and energy constructing social systems to serve static populations. In doing so, we have:

1. Ignored the mobility factor in planning national and state policy for services and programs.
2. Tended to establish inflexible time frames for delivery of services and programs.
3. Constructed systems that are not as dynamic as the sum total of all populations.
4. Insisted that everyone adapt to immobile systems rather than making the systems accommodate the people they serve.

Since mobility is fundamental to the human condition, we must ask, "How does our society provide services to mobile persons?" And since almost 25 percent of our mobile population is in the age range 5-17, a pertinent question

for the education establishment is "How will the new U. S. Department of Education meet the challenge of providing educational services to the people regardless of whether they are stationary or mobile?" The stark reality is that education, like our other human service systems, is built on the notion that everyone stays in one place. And like other human service systems, education has a momentum which seems to close it off from dealing forcefully with mobility. No one argues the ever increasing significance of problems caused by our lack of attention to mobility. Books are written, speeches are given ad infinitum concerning the need to come to grips with mobility, but what can they do specifically?

Mobility itself is not the problem. The problem is that the system lacks readiness and capability to deal with the uniqueness of mobility. In delivering educational services to migrants and other mobile populations, the major issues are:

1. Identifying, recruiting, and following migrant and other mobile students as they move among numerous school districts throughout the country
2. Providing funds to states for migrant education
3. Communicating mobile students' educational progress and/or achievement from sending schools to receiving schools
4. Making requirements for earning secondary and post-secondary diplomas compatible among the states so that migrant and other mobile students are able to complete an educational program.
5. Accessing local school district educational facilities and resources.
6. Changing local school district practices and attitudes regarding their responsibility for educating migrant and other mobile students

7. Inserting language in federal authorizing legislation to specifically identify migrants and other mobile populations as beneficiaries of services.

As more attention is focused on understanding our mobile society, clusters of individuals moving for similar reasons will be identified and need to be served. For example, significant numbers of lower socioeconomic families move from neighborhood to neighborhood in our urban areas. The concept that education within city boundaries is similar enough not to cause educational problems does not seem to hold. And while there is no question that the lower socioeconomic status of farmworkers and urban migrants makes moving more difficult, the notion that children of higher socioeconomic levels are better prepared to cope with mobility is erroneous.

A different concept in delivery is required to provide educational programs and services to mobile populations. Communications, teamwork, coordination, record transfer, outreach, and follow-up all take on new dimensions when the state and the nation take the place of the neighborhood school. While the neighborhood school continues to provide the physical setting to which the mobile person must have access year round, the role of the state and federal governments is critical in meeting their educational needs because the school will not or cannot follow the individuals across local or state boundaries.

Fortunately, there is today at least one comprehensive educational effort focused on mobility. That is the remarkably cooperative undertaking between federal and state education agencies to develop a system of educational services to children of migrant agricultural and pulp workers and migrant fishers.

In November of 1966, Congress began encouraging, through legislation, adjustments and provisions in our traditional educational system so that services and programs would be provided to migrant and other mobile students as well as to stationary students. The effort demonstrates the "coming to grips" attitude

needed to deal with such an extensive national need. This pioneering venture initiated the development of a system for mobile populations designed to coordinate and integrate with the traditional system that serves the dominant, static population.

II. LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was a landmark in American education. It provided a clear statement of our responsibility to provide, particularly, equal educational opportunities to socially and economically disadvantaged students. But that original legislation, especially the funding mechanism, saw the need of education entirely in terms of non-mobile students.

There was a reason for such perception. Public educators traditionally have disregarded completely the increasing fluidity of the population, by planning buildings, staffing schools, writing curricula, and expressing expectations as if all children remained in one school, one neighborhood, and one community all of their school lives.

Soon it became apparent that the ESEA program for compensatory education--Title I--administratively could not, philosophically would not, and programmatically did not provide for mobile student populations. Much to the credit of a few insightful members of the migrant education community, however, Congress was soon made aware of the unique needs of migrant children and in 1966 amended Title I to establish a special mechanism to serve them. Section 103 of the Educational Amendments of 1966 (Public Law 89-750) provided special funds for "payments to state educational agencies for assistance in educating migratory children of migratory agricultural workers." P.L. 89-750 also required transfer of academic and health records of migrant children. This was the beginning of what became the Migrant Student Record Transfer System.

Subsequent amendments continued to recognize the unique educational needs of migrant and mobile students and articulated congressional intent to establish a distinct system to deliver comprehensive services effectively and efficiently to them.

Section 109 of the Education Amendments of 1967 (P. L. 90-247) provided for the eligibility of former migrant students. This was in recognition of the fact that migrant students, when first "settling out" of migrancy to become permanent residents in a community, face a period of transition for which schools normally do not provide. Schools need special incentive and support for establishing transitional programs.

Section 106 in the Education Amendments of 1970 (P. L. 91-230) established that funds were to be granted on the basis of pupils actually served, not simply on a per capita basis. This was a distinct departure from regular Title I funding wherein funds remain in a local school district even though some students do not. Migrant funds, in effect, move with the child, as do the services.

Section 507 of the Education Admendments of 1972 (P. L. 92-318) further expanded the scope of migrant education by recognizing the need for comprehensive services and declaring eligibility for migrant pre school children.

In 1974, Congress clearly began to understand the issue of mobile populations. In the Education Amendments of that year (P. L. 93-380) it declared that children of migratory fishers were eligible to receive migrant education services, along with children of migratory agricultural workers. Furthermore, Section 122 explicitly excluded the low income factor used in the regular Title I funding formula and removed the school attendance area definition used for regular Title I. The education of migrant children clearly

could not be restricted to local school district boundaries. The education of migrant children needed the flexibility to follow the child throughout the nation.

Even further recognition that the mechanism for delivering educational services to migrant children did not fit the regular Title I mold came shortly after these amendments went into effect. In response to concerns expressed by directors of state migrant program offices, the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education scheduled hearings for November 11 and December 5, 1975, to review the administrative structure and performance of the Migrant Education Branch, then under the administrative direction of the Title I Program Division of the U. S. Office of Education (USOE). The hearings concluded that the Migrant Education Branch, due to the unique character of its mission, would be more effective if taken out of the Title I Division and placed in a position of greater visibility in the USOE structure. Following an internal administrative audit in 1977 and additional congressional hearings in October of that year, the Migrant Program Branch was given division status within USOE, equal to the Title I program office. It was also recommended that the staff be increased.

In 1976, when the House amended the Higher Education Act, it began migrant program expansion into postsecondary education. The Department of Labor had recommended defunding the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) and the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), which were part of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). The House directed the Secretary of Labor to see to it that HEP and CAMP continued to receive funds and the programs later were transferred to the Department of Education and then written into 1980 amendments to the Higher Education Act.

The Education Amendments of 1978 (P. L. 95-561) sanctioned the existing Migrant Student Record Transfer System as an interstate communication network that would meet the need for rapid transmission of information as students moved throughout the country. Section 143 also required interstate cooperation and coordination in program development and operation to improve service delivery to migrant and mobile students.

The chronology of these amendments shows Congress ascribing ever greater comprehensiveness and responsiveness to the education of migrant students. In 1979, Section 303(a) of the Department of Education Organization Act established a separate office for migrant education and thereby brought to culmination Congress' intent for migrant education. That intent was first expressed in the Senate Report on the ESEA Amendments of 1967:

> It is the sense of the Committee that the Department (HEW)... create a special high level position to pool the resources available, to encourage the development of programs of a multicounty and multistate nature and to interest colleges and other groups in initiating research programs specifically designed to meet the needs of transients in education and educationally related matters on a continuing basis.

Section 303(a) is clear evidence that Congress has understood and given importance to the unique mission of migrant education, that it cannot be subject to the restrictions and limitations imposed by static systems and traditional thinking. The development of educational programs for mobile Americans is a new horizon in the history of American education. That development must not be impeded.

III. STRUCTURE FOR CONTINUITY

The requirements of migrant education mandate a need for the federal administrator to design, develop, implement, and maintain a set of activities and program operations that can be coordinated throughout the educational system: at national, state, and local levels; from preschool to postsecondary, including special programs such as vocational and exceptional child education.

The implementation of these activities and program operations occurs in the local school plant, the local and state education agencies, and between and among states and local school districts. Unlike other federal programs that operate at the state level and within a single state's boundaries, the migrant program operates like a vast state education agency that has national boundaries, with the states operating as local school districts within those boundaries. This federal-state relationship for the delivery of education support services is unprecedented.

A key question in determining the structure for migrant education is, Where should the primary responsibility be placed?

The Congress addressed this issue when it amended ESEA Title I in 1966. Congress believed that the structure and focus of programs and services in the local education agency were not consistent with the needs of mobile populations, that the mobility of the migrant child was beyond the control of the local education agency. It therefore placed responsibility for program operations at the state education agency level to ensure program coordination and continuity on a statewide basis. Congress also assigned responsibility for program operations at the federal level to ensure interstate coordination and continuity.

It built discretionary and by-pass mechanisms into the statute to ensure that services would be available to mobile populations as they moved about the nation. Thus, federal and state education agencies were held accountable for their actions.

The state education agency was challenged to develop its service delivery capability rather than to operate solely as an administrative unit. The federal government was challenged to use its national leadership resources to provide the interstate linkage among programs and projects needed to achieve instructional continuity on a national basis in migrant education. Instructional continuity is the most critical factor in providing education to mobile students. An educational program designed for the national community, operating with intradepartmental and interdepartmental thrusts, will ultimately allow American education to serve every student regardless of how frequently the student moves.

The number of continuous instructional days in one school facility is the primary difference between education for static populations and education for mobile populations. The challenge, therefore, to migrant education has been to develop a system of information exchange between school districts and states to provide the equivalent of "180 days of instructional continuity" for students, something which is assured students in a static environment.

For a dozen years migrant education advocates have been working diligently to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of predicting and efficiently managing the mobility of each migrant student. In 1968 the states cooperated in designing and developing the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS),

a computerized information network that links all the states together to meet the need for intrastate and interstate exchange of academic and health information on migrant students.

The dynamics of MSRTS is evidenced by the recent implementation of a communications system through which a "sending" teacher can transmit specific math, reading, oral language, and preschool skills information to a "receiving" teacher. The "receiving" teacher may be in the adjoining school district or several states away from the "sending" teacher. In addition, the MSRTS has achieved a level of development that allows migrant education to assume a leadership role in gaining interdepartmental agreements for interstate coordination, such as the recent interagency agreement with the Migrant Health Division to improve service delivery and program continuity to mobile clients.

The Migrant Student Record Transfer System lays the foundation for coordinating student movement between and among school districts and states, and for integrating students quickly as they move through our traditionally static system. Thus, it provides "electronic corridors" through which the nation's education and health communities can build upon each other's efforts in meeting the individual needs of mobile students.

The MSRTS is a significant beginning. However, it is merely the foundation for the "electronic school system" necessary to meet the unique needs of mobile populations. The MSRTS is to the electronic school system what the one-room schoolhouse was to our traditional school system.

Elementary and Secondary Education

The major emphasis in Migrant Education has been on preschool and elementary school activities. Consequently, these areas of instruction are more advanced

in their development in terms of both delivery to the client and program methodology. This emphasis reflects the original philosophy of Title I, which was to concentrate on the "early grades" to prepare the skills and personality foundation that would assure academic success in the remaining school years. It would be difficult to argue against the "early grades" approach. However, in light of a persistently high drop-out rate (90 percent of migrant students do not graduate from high school), it is blatantly obvious that the Title I administrators need to develop strong secondary education programs.

Critical to serving mobile student populations is the training of all school personnel in the technology required for operating and managing a mobile education system. Regular classroom teachers as well as migrant resource teachers must be able to utilize communication systems such as the MSRTS and the basic skills lists with accuracy and efficiency in order to maintain continuity of instruction.

Educational philosophy and psychology must be altered or adjusted to accommodate the special needs of mobile students. The 180 days of instruction generally required by our static education system is unobtainable in migrant education without using the entire 365 days of the year. Teachers and other school personnel must be trained to prepare highly individualized units of instruction for short periods of time. Teachers must be prepared to accept the reality that they will not be able to see the outcome of their instruction.

Migrant Education, in reality, is a sequence of "substitute teachers." It cannot succeed unless all teachers and other school personnel utilize the Migrant Student Record Transfer System to communicate with each other, across

the nation, about their work with each migrant student entering and leaving their classrooms. This communication is particularly critical at the high school level. All state education agencies, with support from the federal government, must work out an interstate agreement for credit accrual and exchange so that migrant and other mobile students can earn a diploma upon meeting high school requirements.

Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education for mobile students is confronted with two challenges: first, the development of a system to educate the student who continues to be highly mobile while pursuing a degree; second, the development of a support system to help mobile students adjust to a static environment.

The experiences of the High School Equivalency Program (HEP), the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), the Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS), the California Mini-Corps, and the New York Migrant Tutorial Program give evidence that mobile youth do indeed aspire to secondary and postsecondary degrees. They are demonstrating that native intelligence enables mobile students, with or without preparation, to succeed in college and other programs of higher learning. It was said earlier that HEP and CAMP are now part of the migrant education system. However, other programs of the types mentioned need to be developed and added to the system to overcome unreasonable obstacles that continue to be placed in the paths of many mobile students who want to continue their education. The longer the delay in this expansion, the greater the waste in human resources.

The need for interstate communication and credit accrual and exchange continue to be critical for achieving full instructional continuity for

migrant and other mobile students, from preschool through the postsecondary level.

Research And Development

Whether or not the United States will ever be able to adequately serve its mobile populations will depend a great deal on the resources and leadership that will be committed to research and development in all aspects of their education. National and state policy, laws and regulations, funding, program design and evaluation, preservice and continuing education of personnel, communications and logistics, and the identification of mobile populations and patterns all must be addressed by research in order to fully develop and improve on an appropriate response system. Properly synthesized, the products and findings will culminate in new practices to improve interstate coordination and help facilitate the integration (flow-through) of migrant and other mobile students into the static school system. Continuous research and data evaluation will validate productive practices and trigger adjustments where obstructive practices are employed, in either the mobile or the static system.

IV. PLACEMENT OF THE OFFICE OF MIGRANT EDUCATION

To achieve the migrant/mobile education mission, the Office of Migrant Education should report directly to the Secretary of Education. This placement will permit the visibility, operational flexibility, and interdepartmental basis to assure maximum utilization of available resources. The support of the Office of the Secretary is indispensable in carrying out research for developing a migrant/mobile education system.